



## FACT SHEET

### ACT NOW: Stop oil and gas development in the Red Desert!

*Prepared by the Wyoming Outdoor Council*

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In Wyoming's most recent state lands oil and gas lease sale, 21 parcels located in the fragile, beautiful Red Desert received bids and are now under threat of development. These parcels are slated for final sale authorization by the State Board of Land Commissioners on August 9. Tell the Board that you want these leases withdrawn and not authorized. Submit comments by Tuesday, July 24 if possible.

#### Who sits on the State Board of Land Commissioners?

The State Board is comprised of Wyoming's top elected officials:

- **Matt Mead**, Wyoming Governor ([email form](#))
- **Edward Buchanan**, Secretary of State ([SecOfState@wyo.gov](mailto:SecOfState@wyo.gov))
- **Cynthia Cloud**, State Auditor ([SAOAdmin@wyo.gov](mailto:SAOAdmin@wyo.gov))
- **Mark Gordon**, State Treasurer ([treasurer@wyo.gov](mailto:treasurer@wyo.gov))
- **Jillian Balow**, Superintendent of Public Instruction ([superintendent@wyo.gov](mailto:superintendent@wyo.gov))

#### What's at risk?

The state withdrew only one lease parcel it had slated for sale — the iconic Boars Tusk. If oil and gas development takes place on the 21 remaining bid parcels, the following resources will be harmed:

- **National Historic Trails:** 2 parcels lie directly on top of or within the corridors of the Oregon/California/Mormon/Pony Express trails.
- **Heart of Wild Areas:** 4 parcels lie directly within or border a BLM-designated wilderness study area where no drilling is allowed, or in lands far from roads and infrastructure.
- **Prohibited Oil and Gas Area:** 5 parcels lie within the boundaries of a BLM-designated area where oil and gas leasing is prohibited to protect cultural and natural resources.
- **Area of Critical Environmental Concern:** 3 parcels fall within the BLM-designated "South Pass Historic Landscape" area of critical environmental concern, which protects the viewshed of this nationally significant emigrant trail area.
- **Sensitive Wildlife Habitat:** 5 parcels contain crucial winter range for big game (elk, mule deer or pronghorn), and 10 parcels are within Greater sage-grouse core areas.

#### What should you mention?

- Request the State Board withdraw **all the leases for sale** in the Northern Red Desert. It helps to cite all the parcel numbers, so please copy and use this list:

**115, 118–123, 130, 132–135, 141–145, 148, 152, 154, 175**

- Point out that leasing remote parcels surrounded by protected federal lands simply doesn't make sense. Most of the state parcels have no road or pipeline access — creating threats of future impacts where none exist today. That means successful bidders will encounter access and regulatory hurdles.
- Speak to the importance of the Red Desert for economic diversification in Wyoming; public lands and wildlife play an important future role for bolstering tourism and outdoor recreation — our state's second largest industry.
- **There is a better way!** An exchange of these isolated state parcels for BLM lands elsewhere that are more conducive for development and access would provide a better guarantee of revenue while protecting this landscape for the future. This plan is already in process.

## How should I compose my message?

Begin your message with personal details: where you live, and your connection to the issue. Be brief, and simply state the action you'd like them to take, for example: **"Please withdraw the leases for sale in the Northern Red Desert."** Speak from your **experiences and values**, about why some places are too special to drill. Mention any of the special places or activities you love that may be at risk, including Honeycomb Buttes, Steamboat Mountain, the Sand Dunes, South Pass, or hunting, protection of cultural resources, wildlife viewing, hiking and opportunity for solitude and wilderness. **Remember that you are writing to Wyoming's top officials: be thoughtful and respectful!**

## What's special about the Red Desert?

Wyoming's majestic Northern Red Desert is a place where sweeping vistas, iconic landforms, big game, cultural sites, emigrant trails and diverse wildlife abound. This landscape contains nine wilderness study areas and is reportedly the largest unfenced area in the lower-48. These lands support a diversity of wildlife and habitats, including the largest living sand dunes in North America, ephemeral pools, badlands, a rare desert elk herd, and the southern reach of the longest mule deer migration in the world. It is a landscape laced with nationally historic trails such as the Oregon/California/Mormon and Pony Express and is rich with Native American cultural sites like Boar's Tusk, Indian Gap, sacred sites, as well as historic abandoned ranches and fossils.

This landscape has been passionately defended by generations of Wyoming residents and is largely protected through special BLM designations and the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan. These provisions do not apply on state lands however, so with this lease sale, **the state plans to develop inside of this federally protected landscape!**

## What about parcels outside the Red Desert?

The following sale parcels lie northwest of the Red Desert, between Highway 28 and the Wind River Range, where there is currently no development: 158–160, 173, 174, 178–187. We recommend protecting this iconic viewshed of our historic trails and as a scenic gateway to the popular southern Wind River trailheads. Please add these parcels into your comments as well, if you like.